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# 9. Noah as a Mediator between a Universal and an “Israelite” Reading of Genesis 1–11

Joep Dubbink

## 9.1 Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The Children’s Bible of my youth<sup>2</sup> begins, rather unexpectedly, not with the creation of heaven and earth, but with Abram. That doesn’t mean that the great stories the bible begins with – creation, paradise, Cain and Abel, Noah and the flood, the tower of Babel – are missing. They are introduced almost at the end of the Old Testament volume, when the narrative arrives at the presumed time of their origin in the Babylonian Exile. Following the story of the prophet Jeremiah and the fall of Jerusalem, the authors describe how the Judeans in exile, in Mesopotamia, discovered the existence of stories about creation and the flood, and in the course of time developed their own versions of these stories. This hypothetical but quite probable course of events is what the great old testament scholar Gerhard von Rad once called “die Vorbau der Urgeschichte” – “the addition of the *primaeval* history.”<sup>3</sup>

Of course, as a child or teenager, I was completely unaware of the exegetical and theological background of presenting the biblical stories in this unusual order. Many years later however, I take it as a starting point to reconsider the relationship between the so-called “primal history” and the patriarchal narratives. In particular, I will focus on the biblical-theological impact, which is considerable.

The first eleven chapters of the book Genesis have puzzled many readers. What type of literature is this, and how do these chapters theologically relate to the following narrative about the ancestors of Israel? Why does the Hebrew bible start at all with the apparently “universal” history as told in Genesis 1–11? This paper will focus on the question, whether these chapters are to be read and understood as particularly “Israelite” or rather as “universal.” Or, if a dichotomy is a too simple solution,<sup>4</sup> how both readings relate to each other.

<sup>1</sup> This article is partly based on lectures held at the Colloquium Biblicum in Prague, 23 April 2014, and at the Bible Seminar at Queen’s foundation for ecumenical theological education, Birmingham, 11 November 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Eykman – Bouman 1979, 206–235.

<sup>3</sup> von Rad 1966, 63ff.

<sup>4</sup> Levenson 1996, 142, remarks that ‘the all-too-common contrast between ‘universal’ and ‘particularistic’ religion is, in every instance, simplistic, grossly misleading, and even dangerous.’ He is right, of course, but we first have to distinguish what at the very least are contrasting concepts.

## 9.2 Dividing Genesis

Whoever reads the book of Genesis will observe it easily divides itself into four major parts: three sets of stories with a clear main character, Abraham, Jacob and Joseph respectively, and the introductory eleven chapters that are more difficult to label. In biblical scholarship we would prefer to have slightly more objective criteria for this division, and for that purpose the word תולדות, *toledoth*, presents itself.

The *toledoth of such and such*, derived from ילד *hiph'il*, “to beget,” “to cause to bring forth,” is usually translated by “generations” or “descendants.” In modern translations we sometimes find “account,” “story” or even “family history,” which is not incorrect because אלה תולדות, “these are the generation,” indeed serves as a heading of the main parts of the story.<sup>5</sup>

The expression אלה תולדות is found ten times in Genesis on a total of thirteen in the Hebrew bible. Not all of these instances denote the beginning of a new section; we also have the side branches, for example the *toledoth of Ismael and Esau*.<sup>6</sup> Leaving these aside for a moment, we indeed arrive at a division in four parts:

11:27 *toledoth Terah* – the story of Abraham

25:19 *toledoth Jitzchaq* – the story of Jacob

37:2 *toledoth Ja'aqob* – the story of Joseph

We can conclude that the stories are always named after the father of the main character. By the way, we observe that there is no *toledoth Abraham*. Isaac, the second patriarch, is an in-between: half of his life he is the son of his father, the other half he is the father of his son. We might be right in suspecting him of being “constructed” to connect the stories of Abraham and Jacob.

But how about *toledoth* and Genesis 1–11? The first time we come across the word is in Genesis 2:4:

אלה תולדות השמים והארץ בהבראם

These are the generations of heaven and earth, at their being created.

There is fierce discussion about this sentence. Most commentators suppose that it is reflecting on the creation that just has been told in Genesis 1:1–2:3; but that would be the only instance where אלה תולדות was situated *after* the story it referred to. So, we could also assume that this is a heading for what is coming next.<sup>7</sup>

There is another important text, Genesis 5:1, in which we find a unique expression:

<sup>5</sup> The work of Frans H. Breukelman sr. on the expression may not go unmentioned here; unfortunately, almost all of it is published in Dutch only, e.g. Breukelman 1992, 11–60.

<sup>6</sup> See for a concise and complete overview: Crüsemann 1996, 74–75.

<sup>7</sup> E.g. Breukelman 1992, 14, 17v; cf. Deurloo 1998, 39v. I am aware of the fact that this division goes against classical source criticism: the expressions with תולדות are regarded as typical P-language and Gen 2:4b–4:26 is reckoned as J.

זה ספר תולדות אדם

This is the book of the generations of Adam / the human being.

We conclude that with this word *toledoth*, we could divide the patriarchal parts of Genesis neatly into three sections about Abraham, Jacob and Joseph, but in “primal history” the situation is more confused. There is good reason to emphasize that 5:1 acts as a caption for all that is following, the whole book of Genesis, and single out the first four chapters.<sup>8</sup> Be that as it may, it is clear that the word *toledoth* is somehow used to connect Genesis 1–11 with Genesis 12–50; apparently, strengthening of this connection was needed.

### 9.3 Primal history or “Urgeschichte”

The stories of Genesis 1–11 have characteristics that differ considerably from those in the patriarchal stories from Genesis 12 and onwards. In Genesis 1–11, “history” has certain almost mythical aspects, like the story about the garden of Eden, and the genealogies of the ancestors and their extraordinary long lives. In particular, Genesis 6:1–4 seems more at home in Homer than in the Hebrew bible. But above all, the tenor is different. From Genesis 12 on, we focus on one man, one family, one tribe, and this focus on Israel is typical for almost all parts of the Hebrew bible, which is not unexpected as this *is* the book of Israel. Why then do we need these first eleven chapters, and how do they relate to the rest of Genesis?

### 9.4 Does historical-critical research provide an answer?

To answer this question, we could dive into the historical critical analysis of Genesis and hope that this would provide an answer to our question. Unfortunately, it does so only in part. We could follow the classical setup of Genesis, the idea that the three sources of Jahwist (J), Elohist (E) and “Priestly source” (P) were combined by one or more Redactors (R) to form the text we have. We would then learn that in the primal history we only find two of these three sources: J and P, not E, who only starts with Abraham. Does this indicate that once a version of Genesis existed without the primal history? Perhaps. But then, this classical view of the literary history of Genesis, once the peak of Old Testament scholarship, has since long been challenged. Many lost their “belief” in the Elohist long ago, and some also discard the Yahwist as an independent source. Alternative theories have come up: not three separate sources, but two or only one storyline to which other fragments, bits and pieces, were attached.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Breukelman 1992, 12–20.

<sup>9</sup> An overview of even the literature on the discussion is far outside of the scope of this paper. Römer 2006 offers a concise overview (see p. 10, note 4, for more literature). He doubts if a continuous source of Yahwistic or non-priestly material can be found in the Pentateuch, while Van Seters 2006 tries to save the renowned biblical author, albeit dated much later than former scholars did.

One conclusion can safely be drawn: almost all recent scholars regard this type of research as very tiresome, all the more because it doesn't yield convincing exegetical and theological results. They opened new lines of inquiry, started asking other questions and didn't think the exegesis was ready when every single verse of Genesis was assigned to the right source document.<sup>10</sup> Historical critical analyses doesn't help us, because in the presumed source documents the combination of primal and patriarchal narratives was already present, and anyway the final text offers the stories even more integrated.

## 9.5 Two positions

Regarding the relationship between primal and patriarchal stories, two main biblical theological positions can be distinguished:

1. In the Hebrew bible, *Israel is the centre*. There is no understanding of "God" nor of "humankind" in general, but *YHWH* is proclaimed as the God of Israel, who is God in a particular, specific way, and the election of Israel as his people is a central element in the Hebrew bible. Of course, the other nations are included in this election, Israel is blessed to be a blessing for the *goyim*, the nations, but Israel is God's main objective, from the beginning; it is the firstborn between many brothers and sisters.

2. The Hebrew bible is fundamentally *universal*. God is the God of all people, of everything that exists, the Creator of heaven and earth. Of course, there is this long "interlude," in which the narrator focuses on the children of Abraham, but that story is embraced by a universal beginning, the primal history, and a universal ending; the later prophetic and certainly the apocalyptic parts open themselves again towards universalism, and so does the continuation of the Hebrew bible in the New Testament.

## 9.6 Two German scholars

The two positions could be called, respectively, the particularistic and the universal approach. Let's first deepen our understanding of what is at stake by quoting two "grand old men" of Old Testament scholarship. For the first position, we call as a witness Gerhard von Rad (1960):

Whoever speaks about Israel, about the purpose of its history of election, must start with the creation of the world, and understand this people's place in the universe of all nations. This is the message of Gen 12:1–3: that the primal history should be understood as one of the most important elements of the theological origin of Israel.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Pace Eissfeldt 1962 and some of his contemporaries.

<sup>11</sup> Author's own translation of von Rad 1969, 178: "Wer von Israel redet, von dem Sinn seiner Erwählungsgeschichte, der muß schon bei der Weltschöpfung anfangen und es im Universum der Völkerwelt zu verstehen suchen. Einen weniger anspruchsvollen Rahmen gibt es für die Fragen, die mit der Berufung und Erwählung Israels aufge-

So, primal history is presented *because of* Israel; the general is in function of the specific. If one hears Barthian overtones, one is not mistaken.

For the second position Claus Westermann signs, a scholar of equal stature. From the conclusion of the first volume of his commentary on Genesis:

The significance [of Gen 1–11] lies in the addition of the primal history at the beginning of history. In this way, the God-talk of Gen 1–11 is incorporated in the God-talk of the rest of the Pentateuch and the other parts of the Old Testament. The God who liberated Israel from Egypt is at the same time the God who created heaven, earth and humankind. In this way, the experience of the God who saves is given a wide, universal horizon. [...] This prevents the development of a theology of the Old Testament that is focussing on the exclusive relationship between God and his people, to which the universal aspect is subordinated.<sup>12</sup>

In his view, Genesis 1–11 offers a universal "entrance" to the story of God and mankind, which should be given the weight it deserves, and not be subordinated to the history of Israel.

We shouldn't exaggerate the differences between these two positions. There is considerable contrast, but in the end, it is a matter of focus rather than of two mutual exclusive views. Both scholars acknowledge the importance of Israel as God's people, and both acknowledge the rightful place of primal history.<sup>13</sup> So we hear the same elements: Israel, creation, liberation from Egypt, history of salvation, universal, but they are combined in a different way, and the result is a rather different focus. Why is that? In my opinion, the context of both scholars is decisive: von Rad (1901–1970) was slightly older than Westermann (1909–2000), eight crucial years. He was already teaching during the German church battle in the 1930s, and he was fiercely anti-Nazi. After the war, he held numerous speeches about the value of the Old Testament, the priority of Israel and the need for reconciliation. Westermann, who wrote his commentary in the 1970s, was much more focused on issues like how to deal with the message of the Old Testament in an age of humanist philosophies like existentialism.

worfen sind, nicht. Das also lehrt Gen. 12,1–3: daß nämlich die Urgeschichte als eines der wesentlichsten Elemente einer theologischen Ätiologie Israels verstanden werden muß."

<sup>12</sup> Westermann 1974, 805: "Die Bedeutung [sc. des Urgeschehens] liegt in der Vorfügung der Urgeschichte vor die Geschichte. Mit ihr erhält das Reden von Gott in Gn 1–11 einen Teil am Reden von Gott im übrigen Pentateuch und in den weiteren Teilen des AT. Der Gott, der Israel aus Ägypten errettete, dem Israel in seiner Geschichte begegnet ist, ist zugleich der Gott, der Himmel und Erde und die Menschheit geschaffen hat. Damit ist Israels Erfahrung des rettenden Gottes in einen weiten, allumfassenden Horizont gestellt. [...] Es ist dann nicht mehr möglich, eine Theologie des AT ausschließlich von der 'Heilsgeschichte', ausschließlich von der Beziehung Gottes zu seinem Volk her zu konzipieren und den universalen Aspekt dem unterzuordnen."

<sup>13</sup> It must be said that von Rad is not very fond of creation stories; he emphasizes that they are not extant in Israel's earliest testimonies, and that the necessity to tell them arose when contacts with the non-Israelite world intensified; von Rad 1969, 149f.

## 9.7 Biblical Theologies

Von Rad and Westermann represent scholarship of almost two generations ago; how were their views developed in biblical theology during the following decades? A short and far from complete survey.

- *Rolf Knierim* (1981) fully acknowledges the question, and phrases it in a succinct way: "... whether the purpose of the creation of the world is the history and existence of Israel, or whether the purpose of Israel's history and existence is to point to and actualize the meaning of creation."<sup>14</sup> In his opinion, the latter is true, and he decidedly stands with Westermann. He even dedicates this chapter of his book to him (and he explicitly warns that the problem can't be solved with a "both-and." His answer: the latter.
- *Brevard S. Childs* (1983) also indicates the choice, and explicitly mentions von Rad and Westermann. He even acknowledges that von Rad's view on the *toledoth*-texts supports his explanation. But according to his own "canonical" approach the *last* phase of tradition (the addition of the primal history) must prevail. "To summarize: the canonical role of Gen. 1–11 testifies to the *priority of creation*." He stresses "... God's initial creative purpose for the universe, *not for Israel alone*."<sup>15</sup> Even though he sees an important role for Israel, a role that was "meant to be," in his opinion, it is *not* the purpose of creation. We must remember that Childs, while an excellent exegete, gradually developed into a systematic theologian; biblical scholars are often more modest and reluctant, and don't pretend to know about "Gods purpose" in such an absolute way. We could also ask ourselves if we hear an echo of the political changes in the 1980s as far as the state of Israel is concerned.
- *Walter Brueggemann* (1997). It is difficult to extract a "doctrine of primal history" from this book. He identifies himself as a postmodern scholar, and accordingly he emphasizes the diversity of opinion on this issue within the Hebrew bible. It contains different views on the importance of Israel: some parts focus heavily on this people alone, while other parts open up towards the *goyim*. But in his exposé of the history of biblical theology he devotes much attention to von Rad, and he gives an exemplary exposition of the tension between the call of Israel and the YHWH intention to bring the whole world to blessing.<sup>16</sup> He especially focuses on Genesis 12:3 as the "pivotal point" where Genesis 1–11 and the ancestral narratives are connected. In my opinion, we find him closer to von Rad than most biblical theologians.
- *John Goldingay* (2003). Taking his starting point from narrative theology (a new development) and stating that "the particular is in some sense prior to general rules and principles," we would expect him to side with von Rad and give priority to Israel. Contrary to that, he states in a central quotation: "History is subordinate to creation in the sense that its task is to restore creation to what

<sup>14</sup> Knierim 1981, 181 (ch. "Cosmos and History," 171–224).

<sup>15</sup> Childs 1983, 155 (italics mine).

<sup>16</sup> Brueggemann 1997, 31–38, 431–432; the expression "pivotal point": p. 168 note 43.

it was supposed to be.”<sup>17</sup> His view is determined by salvation history: because the first human couple sinned, the need arose for history as we know it, because in this history, through the election of Gods people and Jesus Christ, human sin could be reconciled. Human history as a side effect of sin and reconciliation – a decidedly infralapsarian stance, taking us far into Christian systematic theology.

- Dick Boer (2008/2009). A completely different view is offered by a Dutch theologian whose work was only recently published in English;<sup>18</sup> a very engaged theologian who taught history of theology in Amsterdam, and belongs to what was called the *Amsterdam School of Exegesis*.<sup>19</sup> He reads the Hebrew bible in a critical, political way, influenced by Karl Barth as well as by Karl Marx. Unsurprisingly, he sides with von Rad in the debate about universal and particular, and he does so in a rather pointed way. He regards the entire primal history as an integral part of the history of Israel. Quite literally, God did not create a “human being” in a generic sense, but an Israelite man and woman. In his words: “Genesis 2 is not the *Israelite locus de homine*, it is the *locus de homine israelitico*!” We should understand what “Israelite” means; for him, it is not the ethnical Israel, historical or contemporary, but a theological category; the human being that is raised from the dust, liberated from slavery.

## 9.8 Results so far

More examples from biblical theologies could be given, which would confirm the impression of the above survey that the “universalists” establish a clear majority, and that only a few theologians have a different opinion. According to Knierim, we *have* to choose, and there is no easy integration of both views. Either we stress God’s universal goal, and accept the risk that our theology loses all specific Israelite flavour and all prophetic sting, all “spirit;” or we stress the particular Israelite which keeps us closer to the biblical core testimony, but carries another risk that is imminent in our time; exclusion or at least degrading of all those that are defined as “non-Israelite.”

The issue at stake is important: how do we speak of humankind in biblical theology? Is there a *humanum* apart from our belonging to a specific ethnicity, “race,” language, religion? Are we primarily human beings, and should we connect to people that differ from us in ethnic background or in religion by focussing on the fact that we are all human beings, sharing a universal biology and a common “human-ness?” That is the way universal agreements on human rights understandably argue,<sup>20</sup> but biblical theology is bound to go other roads and perhaps offer a deeper insight: can we shake off so easily the fact that we belong to a group? And

<sup>17</sup> Goldingay 2003, 191.

<sup>18</sup> His highly original Biblical Theology was published in German and Dutch (2008, resp. 2009) and finally in English: Boer 2014.

<sup>19</sup> See the Wiblex article by Bauer 2014. Unfortunately, there is only a very limited number of publications in English: Kessler 1994, 2004, and a small number of dissertations.

<sup>20</sup> The famous 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* is based on “...recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the hu-



could primal history, as an introduction to the large parts of the Hebrew bible that are particularly Israelite, offer a reading instruction on how this focus on Israel is to be understood?

## 9.9 The chosen one and the others

In the patriarchal parts of Genesis one of the main questions is: who is heir to the divine promise? Is it Ishmael or is it Isaac, is it Esau or is it Jacob? Which one of the children of Jacob will carry away the real blessing? The answer to these questions is always non-binary, not exclusive: yes, the ancestral line goes on with Isaac and with Jacob, they are blessed, but they are blessed together with the others. There is a blessing for Ishmael (Gen 17:20), for Esau (27:39–40), Hagar is rescued with her son (21:17–21), as is Lot with his daughters (19:15–23). As these represent the Ishmaelite, Ammonite and Moabite neighbours, the conclusion must be that the blessing of Abram, that “all peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (12:3) is actually effective. This is the way biblical election and blessing often works; not exclusive but inclusive.

How then does primal history prepare us for that effect? How is the wide perspective of the entire humanity in creation connected with the focus on one family, one people?

## 9.10 A third way – Noah comes at our rescue

In my opinion, the story of Noah and the flood combines elements both from the creation stories and from the patriarchal narratives. The problems we struggle with, the relationship between universal history and the story of Abraham and his fold, were in a sense already envisaged by the authors of Genesis, and the story of Noah can help the present reader with these issues. It is difficult to prove that this help was intentional, but in my opinion, it is remarkable how Noah is put on the stage somewhere between creation and the focus on one Israelite genealogical line. Some observations:

1. The story of Noah is exactly in the centre of Genesis 1–11. According to Genesis 5:1–32, we count ten generations from Adam until Noah. After ten generations, the monotonous sequence of fathers and sons is interrupted by Noah and his *three* sons, all mentioned by name. This is repeated after the flood: in Genesis 11:10–26, again ten generations are counted from Noah until Terah, of whom also three sons are mentioned. Noah is in the middle, and I would say he is the mediator.
2. The story of the flood has many similarities with the story of creation. Genesis 9:1 repeats what was already said in 1:26–28: the blessing and the commandment “be fruitful and multiply.” Genesis 9:2–3 contains instructions about the food allowed to humankind, just like in Genesis 1. The rules have

man family” (<https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>, last visited 5. 10. 2019).

changed, however: meat, not mentioned in Genesis 1, is added to the menu as a possibility.<sup>21</sup> Genesis 9 also addresses the possibility of people threatening and killing each other – the story of Cain and Abel is taken into account. After the flood, the earth makes a new start. Much has remained the same, for example the blessing and the commandments, but there are subtle changes: the great expectations expressed by “it is good... it is very good!” in Genesis 1 are not repeated.

3. However, something new appears: the בְּרִית, “covenant,”<sup>22</sup> used both for the saving of Noah, and his family in the flood (6:18) and for the new condition after the flood, a בְּרִית with humans, animals and the earth itself (9:9–17). After the flood, YHWH as Lord or suzerain makes a vassal treaty with Noah and his family and all living creatures (9:12). It is remarkable that many exegetes downplay the importance of the use of בְּרִית here. In their eyes, the word is only used as an analogy; a real בְּרִית is personal and can only be made with a family or a people, not with all mankind. In this way, they exactly miss the point:
  - (a) Some make creation itself equal to a בְּרִית. That is confusing: creation is never called בְּרִית and it is clear why: the word would lose its function.
  - (b) Others regard it as just a “solemn promise,” which is not incorrect (see note 22) but why apply that insight *only* to the “covenants” in Genesis 6 and 9? Apparently, Westermann is so convinced of the inherent difference between primal and patriarchal history that he feels justified in making this distinction;<sup>23</sup> but then, would the author of Genesis 6 and 9 have been aware that he was writing primal history?
4. Noah is in the centre. He connects “primal history” and the rest of Genesis, and his story teaches us something about the biblical theological ground structure. Even before Israel appears in the canonical sequence, Noah shows us what “election” means. It is the way YHWH is said to work in history: *one* is chosen, not just because of himself, but for the benefit of all, *pars pro toto*, the part as a representation of the whole. That is a strong line in biblical theology we can find almost everywhere: the Hebrew bible is all about Israel, but not just for Israel’s sake. However, we might miss that idea because of the extended concentration on Gods people, and we might also miss the warning at the beginning: Genesis 12:2–3, where YHWH explicitly tells Abram what being blessed means. We might even miss all moments in history where this is demonstrated, like

<sup>21</sup> The reason deserves more attention than can be given here; it seems probable that it has to do with the “loss of innocence” of humanity, shown by the violence described in Gen 4 and Gen 6.

<sup>22</sup> Translations tending towards “agreement” or “treaty” should be used with caution, as בְּרִית does not mean a truce or treaty between two more or less equal parties. Comparison with Assyrian vassal treaties has shed more light on the term. E. Kutsch has consistently argued for a different understanding: “*berît* does not indicate a ‘relationship,’ but is the ‘determination,’ ‘obligation,’ accepted by the subject of the *berît*,” so in TLOT; likewise M. Weinfeld in TDOT, 253–279, esp. 255–257. However, one can argue that even this primarily one-sided obligation *does* establish a relationship.

<sup>23</sup> Westermann 1974, 631, stresses the unilateral character of the בְּרִית in 9:8–17: it “...establishes that God makes a pledge to Noah and all living creatures that came out of the Ark, not however, that he makes a covenant with them” (*translation mine*).

the story of Joseph: he is blessed, and all of Egypt benefits from this. Israel is, when being blessed, representing all nations in the world.

5. More profound exegesis would support the interconnectivity of primal history and the rest of the Pentateuchal narrative. I can only mention some details here, in part well known: the use of תִּבְרָה for Noah's ark as well as for the basket Moses was laid in (Exod 2:3); the repeated use of the verbs שָׁלַח and יָצָא, both keywords in the Exodus story; the motive of salvation through life-threatening waters (Food and Red Sea, Exod 14). The political salvation of the Israelites from slavery has its counterpart in the cosmic salvation of all creation for the sake of one צַדִּיק, righteous one (Gen 6:8–9). Noah himself in the story is a little bit passive – he is obedient, but he never speaks, and hardly takes any initiative apart from the sending of the birds (8:6–14). He doesn't come close to the stature of Moses in Exodus, yet he is an important supporting actor. That is shown, for example, by the numerous times the expressions “with him” (or in the dialogue “with you”) are repeated, to emphasize that Noah is saved in the ark, and his travel companions, the diversity of humankind *and* the variety of the animal world, *with him*.<sup>24</sup>

## 9.11 Conclusion

In my opinion, what the story of Noah offers us – and I suspect that is one of the reasons it has received its prominent place – is a reading instruction for the Torah. Without this story, an exclusive reading of the Hebrew bible would have been hard to avoid. Of course, it is still possible to read it in an exclusive way, as “only” a story of a tribe and its God, but then the reader has to be blind for all warnings. Here starts my criticism of those who downplay the universal introduction the final redactor or *Rabbenu* (Franz Rosenzweig) has given to the Pentateuch. This regards in part, with all due respect, von Rad,<sup>25</sup> but also my own theological tradition, represented by Dick Boer and the children's bible I started this article with.<sup>26</sup> Afraid of losing the specific “Israelite” aspects, they sometimes didn't feel the urge for a universal, open reading of the bible.<sup>27</sup> In our present situation, where exclusionist views keep shooting up everywhere, I'm afraid we cannot afford that.

Genesis 1–11 forbids Israel to say: “only with us God made a בְּרִית” – before God did that, he already made one with all creatures. It also forbids Israel to say: “only we are blessed” – the prominent place of the blessing of Noah and his

<sup>24</sup> Gen 7:7, 23; 8:1, 18; resp. 7:18, 19; 8:16, 17 (2×).

<sup>25</sup> von Rad 1967, 101.

<sup>26</sup> When the text is the final instance (“The text can say it,” like Karel A. Deurloo, teacher of both Martin Prudký and myself used to put it) it is a strange move to divert from the canonical sequence and commit oneself to a presumed “genesis,” history of origin, of Genesis.

<sup>27</sup> Some representatives of the Jewish tradition show more awareness of this side of the matter: Levenson 1996, esp. 158f., 168f., makes clear that biblical particularity is not about genetic superiority nor about “(not) being saved.” He tries to steer clear of a “universalism” that erases all group differences and a particularism where religion becomes a function of group interests.

family and all mankind in Genesis 9 precludes that. It is a necessary repetition of Genesis 1; without it, we could have thought that after the flood, or after the "fall" in Genesis 3, as some theologians formulate it, humankind is no longer blessed: but it is!

Noah plays exactly the same role that Israel itself will later play: being elected and saved in order that also others will be saved. Noah is the mediator, in a literary sense between the two kinds of history that we have, and in a theological sense, mediator between God and humankind, and between the stories of creation and the patriarchs. He helps us to keep the balance between the universal and the particular and see them in their dialectic relation; reading Genesis 1–11 before 12–50 *does* change a lot; while reading this thoroughly Israelite narrative about this people and their extraordinary relationship with YHWH, the nations, however disturbing and irritating, are always on the horizon.

Filip Čapek and Petr Sláma (Eds.)

**And God Saw That It Was Good**  
(Gen 1:12)

Beiträge zum Verstehen der Bibel  
Contributions to  
Understanding the Bible

herausgegeben von / edited by

Prof. Dr. Manfred Oeming (Heidelberg)  
Prof. Dr. Dr. h. c. mult. Gerd Theißen (Heidelberg)  
und / and  
Prof. Dr. Moisés Mayordomo (Basel)

Band 42

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LIT

# And God Saw That It Was Good (Gen 1:12)

The Concept of Quality in  
Archaeology, Philology and Theology

edited by

Filip Čapek and Petr Sláma

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LIT

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## List of Abbreviations

ABG	Arbeiten zur Bibel und ihrer Geschichte (series)	BDB	Brown, F. / Driver, S. R. / Briggs, C. A., A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, Oxford 1906
AB	The Anchor Bible (series)		
AD	Anno Domini	BEATAJ	Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des Antiken Judentums (series)
Ant.	Josephus Flavius, <i>Antiquitates Iudaicae</i>		
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament (series)	BETHL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium (series)
ÄOT	Ägypten und Altes Testament (series)		
Apion	Josephus, <i>Contra Apionem</i>	BHS	Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia
Arist	Letter of Aristeas	Bib.	Biblica (journal)
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch (series)	BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar Altes Testament (series)
AThANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments (series)	BM	British Museum
		BN	Biblische Notizen (journal)
ATSAT	Arbeiten zu Text und Sprache im Alten Testament (series)	BVB	Beiträge zum Verstehen der Bibel (series)
AUSS	Andrews University Seminary Studies (journal)	BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament (series)
BAH	Bibliothèque archéologique et historique (series)	BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft (series)
BAR	British Archaeological Reports	BZ	Biblische Zeitschrift (journal)
BASOR	Bulletin of the American School of Oriental Research (journal)	ca.	circa
BC	Before Christ	CAT	Commentaire de l'Ancien Testament
BCE	Before common era	CBQ	Catholic Biblical Quarterly (journal)
Bd.	Band (= volume)	CE	Common era

cf.	Confer/conferatur (= compare)	HAR	Hebrew Annual Review (journal)
chap.	chapter	HAT	Handbuch zum Alten Testament (series)
CV	Communio viatorum (journal)	HBS	Herders Biblische Studien (series)
DBAT	Dielheimer Blätter zum Alten Testament (journal)	HeBAI	Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel (journal)
DeutR	Deuteronomy Rabbah	HK	Handkommentar (series)
dtr.	Deuteronomistic	HThKAT	Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament (series)
EB, MB, LB, IA I and II	Early Bronze, Middle Bronze, Late Bronze, Iron Age I and II	HTR	Harvard Theological Review (journal)
e.g.	exempli gratia (= for example)	HUCA	Hebrew Union College Annual (journal)
esp.	especially	IECOT	International Exegetical Commentary on the Old Testament (series)
ETR	Etudes théologiques et religieuses	i.e.	id est (= that is)
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament (series)	IEJ	Israel Exploration Journal (journal)
fem.	feminine	inv.	Inventory
fig.	figure	JANES	Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society (journal)
fn.	footnote	JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature (journal)
FRLANT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament (series)	JETS	Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society (journal)
f. (singular), ff. (plural)	folio/foliis (= and following)	JHS	Journal of Hebrew Scriptures (journal)
GenR	Genesis Rabbah	JosAs	Joseph and Aseneth
Ges	18Gesenius, W., Hebräisches und Aramäisches Handwörterbuch über das Alte Testament, 18. Auflage, Berlin 2013	JPSTC	The Jewish Publication Society Torah Commentary (series)
HALOT	Koehler, L. / Baumgartner, W., The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament, Leiden et al. 2001	JSOT	Journal for Studies of the Old Testament (journal)

JSOT.S	JSOT Supplement Series (series)	NTOB	Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus (series)
JTS	Journal of Theological Studies (journal)	NumR	Numbers Rabbah
KAI	Donner, H. et al. (eds.), Kanaanäische und Aramäische Inschriften, Wiesbaden 1960–	OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
KeK	Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar (series)	OG	Old Greek
KHC	Kurzer Hand-Commentar (series)	OT/AT	Old Testament / Altes Testament
KJV	King James Version	OTL	Old Testament Library (series)
KTU	Dietrich, M. et al. (eds.), Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit, Münster 2013	OTS	Old Testament Series (series)
LHB/OTS	The Library of Hebrew Bible / Old Testament Studies (series)	par., parr.	parallel, parallels
LXX	Septuagint	PEFQS	Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement (journal)
ms, mss	manuscript, manuscripts	PN	personal name
MT	Masoretic text	P	Priesterschrift
NABU	Nouvelles Assyriologiques Brèves et Utilitaires (journal)	ptc. aor.	participle, aorist
N.B.	note well	ptc. pres.	participle, present
NCBiC	New Cambridge Bible Commentary (series)	QD	Quaestiones disputatae (series)
NEA	Near Eastern Archaeology (journal)	Q	Qumran texts (e.g., 1Q1)
n.	note	RB	Revue Biblique (journal)
no.	number	RGG	Betz, H. D. – Persch, J. et al. (eds.), Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart 1–8, Tübingen 1998–2008 <sup>4</sup>
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version	RHR	Revue de l'histoire des religions (journal)
NTD	Das Neue Testament Deutsch (series)	RSV	Revised Standard Version
NT	Neues Testament	SBLSCS	Society of Biblical Literature, Septuagint and Cognate Studies (series)
		sc., scil.	scilicet (= namely)
		SKI	Studien zu Kirche und Israel (series)

SOTSMS	Society for Old Testament Study Monographs (series)	VIKJ	Veröffentlichungen aus dem Institut Kirche und Judentum (series)
SPB	Studia Post-Biblica (series)	Vita	Josephus, <i>Life of Flavius Josephus</i>
SSN	Studia Semitica Neerlandica (series)	VT.S	Vetus Testamentum Supplement Series (series)
suppl.	supplement		
TANZ	Texte und Arbeiten zum neutestamentlichen Zeitalter (series)	VT	Vetus Testamentum (journal)
		v., vv.	verse, verses
TDOT	Botterweck, G. J. – Ringgren, H. (eds.), Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, 1–16, Grand Rapids, repr. 1990–	WAW	Writings from the Ancient World (series)
		WBC	Word Biblical Commentary (series)
		WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament (series)
THAT	Jenni, E. – Westermann, C., Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament, I–II, München 1971	WO	Die Welt des Orients (journal)
ThWAT	Ringgren, H. (eds.), Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament, I–X, Stuttgart, 1973–	WTJ	The Westminster Theological Journal (journal)
		WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament (series)
TLOT	Jenni, E. – Westermann, C. (eds.), Theological lexicon of the Old Testament, 1–3, Peabody 1997	ZAR	Zeitschrift für Altorientalische und Biblische Rechtsgeschichte (journal)
TRE	Müller, G. – Balz, H. – Krause, G. et al. (eds.), Theologische Realenzyklopädie, I–XXXVI, Berlin, 1974–2004	ZAW	Zeitschrift für Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft (journal)
		ZBK	Zürcher Bibelkommentare (series)
TThZ	Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift (journal)		
UF	Ugaritische Forschungen (journal)	ZDPV	Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins (journal)
UTB	Uni-Taschenbücher (series)		

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